Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims replaces all prior versions and listings of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

Claims 1-27 are canceled.

28. (Currently Amended) A computer implemented method ~~executed in a travel planning system~~, the method comprising:

providing by one or more computers an ~~predicted~~ answer in response to a received seat availability query, by:

retrieving by one or more computers a stored query from a cache database that stores seat availability queries and answers to seat availability queries stored from previously completed seat availability queries sent to revenue management systems ;

determining by the one or more computer systems whether at least some fields in the stored seat availability query ~~either match or~~ are substantially close in characteristics to corresponding fields in the user's seat availability query, with determining including

approximately matching the query fields in the received availability query to at least some of the query fields of a query stored in the cache database;

retrieving from the cache database a stored [[an]] answer corresponding to the stored query that was substantially close in characteristics to the received seat availability query ~~matching the seat availability query from the cache~~;

determining whether the retrieved answer is not stale; and if the retrieved answer is not stale:

returning the retrieved answer as the provided ~~predicted~~ answer to the received ~~user's~~ seat availability query.

29. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 28 further comprising:

storing queries and answers from previously completed seat availability queries in the cache[[;]] and with the ~~wherein storing~~ queries including ~~includes storing~~ one or more query fields for airline name, flight number, origination, destination, date of query, traveler nationality, point of purchase, frequent flyer status and seller data.

30. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 28 ~~wherein storing answers~~ further comprises:

storing ~~one or more~~ answers, the answers including fields for booking codes and booking counts; and

assigning a data parameter to the stored answers, the data parameter including at least ~~wherein assigning includes~~ one ~~or more~~ parameter[[s]] for time, date, source and user characteristics.

31. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 28 wherein determining whether at least some of the fields of a stored query match[[es]] the [[user's]] received seat availability query further comprises:

~~parsing the user's availability query into query fields; and~~

approximately matching the query fields of the availability query to [[the]] query fields stored in the cache database, by determining that values in the query field of the stored query are within a predefined range for values in corresponding fields in the received seat availability query.

32. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 28 wherein matching further comprises:

exactly matching the query fields in the availability query to the query fields of a query stored in the cache database.

Claim 33 is canceled.

34. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 28 wherein if the retrieved answer is stale, sending an actual availability query to an airline availability system that includes a revenue management ~~algorithm and inventory management~~ system to provide an actual answer;

returning the actual answer received from the airline availability system as the answer to the received seat availability query ~~to the user~~; and

storing the actual answer and the actual availability query in the cache database ~~of the availability predictor~~.

35. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 30 wherein determining whether the retrieved answer is not stale further comprises:

retrieving a time stamp parameter corresponding to the retrieved answer;

determining a threshold time; and

comparing the time stamp parameter to the threshold time.

36. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 35 wherein determining a threshold time further comprises:

determining a threshold time according to one or more query factors, said query factors including a date of a flight, an origin of a flight, a destination of a flight, a time of flight, a day of week per flight, a size of the airplane, an actual answer to a completed query that matches the seat availability query and an actual answer to a completed query that does not match the seat availability query.

37. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 28 wherein returning the retrieved answer as the provided ~~predicted~~ answer to the received ~~user's~~ seat availability query further comprises:

determining that the retrieved answer from the cache database is stale;

returning the retrieved answer as the provided ~~predicted~~ answer where the provided ~~predicted~~ includes a confidence factor corresponding to the provided ~~predicted~~ answer; and

accepting the provided ~~predicted~~ answer, or not, based on the confidence factor.

38. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 37 wherein the confidence factor indicates the answer to the seat availability query is based on an actual answer received in response to an actual availability query.

39. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 37 wherein the confidence factor indicates the answer to the seat availability query is true or false to indicate availability, or not, of a provided ~~predicted~~ answer in the cache database.

40. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 37 wherein the confidence factor indicates the answer to the seat availability query is within a certain estimated probability.

41. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 37 wherein the confidence factor indicates a qualitative measure of seat availability.

42. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 37 wherein returning the retrieved answer as the provided ~~predicted~~ answer including a confidence factor corresponding to the provided ~~predicted~~ answer further comprises:

predicting the confidence factor from previously completed seat availability queries in response to a request for a confidence factor.

43. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 42 wherein predicting produces a confidence factor according to a model using historical booking data as a factor in the model.

44. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 43 wherein the historical booking data includes one or more categories for booking rates according to flights, booking rates according to families of flights sold on different dates, booking rates according to aircraft capacity, booking

rates based on labor strikes, booking rates according to sales or other booking rates based on extraordinary events.

45. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 42 wherein predicting produces a confidence factor according to a model using as a factor in the model a threshold time, which if lapsed, indicates that the retrieved answer is considered stale.

46. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 45 wherein the threshold time varies over the lapsing of time.

47. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 45 wherein the threshold time is a pre-set time.

48. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 45 wherein the threshold time is a pre-set time approximately equal to the time an airline is expected to adjust parameters effecting seat availability distributions per booking code.

Claims 49-55 are canceled.

56. (Currently Amended) A computer program product tangibly stored ~~residing~~ on a computer readable device ~~medium for use by a travel planning~~ system for providing seat availability answers in response to a seat availability query, the computer program product comprising instructions for causing a computer to:

provide a provided ~~predicted~~ answer in response to a received seat availability query by instructions to:

retrieve a stored query from a cache that stores seat availability queries and answers to seat availability queries stored from previously completed seat availability queries sent to revenue management systems;

determine whether at least some fields in the stored seat availability query ~~either match or~~ are substantially close in characteristics to corresponding fields in the ~~user's~~ received seat availability query, with instructions to determine including instructions to:

approximately match the query fields in the received availability query to at least some of the query fields of a query stored in the cache database;

retrieve from the cache an answer corresponding to the stored query that was substantially close in characteristics to the seat availability query ~~matching the seat availability query from the cache~~;

determine whether the retrieved answer is not stale; and, if the retrieved answer is not stale,

return the retrieved answer as the provided ~~predicted~~ answer to the received ~~user's~~ seat availability query.

57. (Currently Amended) The computer program product of claim 56 further comprising instructions to:

store queries and answers from previously completed seat availability queries in the cache with the queries including at least one query fields [[of]] for airline name, flight number, origination, destination, date of query, traveler nationality, point of purchase, frequent flyer status and seller data.

58. (Previously Presented) The computer program product of claim 56 further comprising instructions to:

store booking codes and booking counts for answers; and

assign a data parameter to the stored answer with the data parameters including at least one of time, date, source and user characteristics.

59. (Previously Presented) The computer program product of claim 56 wherein instructions to match, further comprises instructions to:

exactly match the query fields in the availability query to the query fields of a query stored in the cache database.

60. (Currently Amended) The computer program product of claim 56 wherein instructions to determine whether at least some of the fields match, further comprises instructions to:

~~approximately match the query fields in the availability query to at least some of the query fields of a query stored in the cache database~~

approximately match query fields of the availability query to the query fields stored in the cache database, by determining that values in the query field of the stored query are within a predefined range for values in corresponding fields in the received seat availability query.

61. (Currently Amended) The computer program product of claim 56, further comprises instructions to:

send an actual availability query to an airline availability system that includes a revenue management ~~algorithm and inventory management~~ system if the retrieved answer is stale;

return the actual answer received from the airline availability system ~~to the user~~; and

store the actual answer and query in the cache database ~~of the availability predictor~~.

62. (Previously Presented) The computer program product of claim 56, wherein instructions to determine whether the retrieved answer is not stale further comprises instructions to:

retrieve a time stamp parameter corresponding to the retrieved answer;

determine a threshold time; and

compare the time stamp parameter to the threshold time.

63. (Previously Presented) The computer program product of claim 56 wherein instructions to determine a threshold time further comprises instructions to:

determine a threshold time according to one or more query factors, the query factors including a date of a flight, an origin of a flight, a destination of a flight, a time of flight, a day of week per flight, a size of the airplane, an actual answer to a completed query that matches the seat availability query and an actual answer to a completed query that does not match the seat availability query.

64. (Currently Amended) The computer program product of claim 56 wherein instructions to return~~ing~~ the retrieved answer as the provided ~~predicted~~ answer to the received ~~user's~~ seat availability query further comprises instructions to:

determine that the retrieved answer from the cache database is stale;

return the retrieved answer as the provided ~~predicted~~ answer where the provided ~~predicted~~ answer includes a confidence factor corresponding to the provided ~~predicted~~ answer; and

accept the provided ~~predicted~~ answer, or not, based on the confidence factor.

65. (Previously Presented) The computer program product of claim 64 wherein the confidence factor indicates the answer to the seat availability query is based on an actual answer received in response to an actual availability query.

66. (Currently Amended) The computer program product of claim 64 wherein the confidence factor indicates the answer to the seat availability query is true or false to indicate availability, or not, of a provided ~~predicted~~ answer in the cache database.

67. (Previously Presented) The computer program product of claim 64 wherein the confidence factor indicates the answer to the seat availability query is within a certain estimated probability.

68. (Previously Presented) The computer program product of claim 64 wherein the confidence factor indicates a qualitative measure of seat availability.

69. (Currently Amended) The computer program product of claim 64 wherein instructions to return the retrieved answer as the provided ~~predicted~~ answer including a confidence factor corresponding to the provided ~~predicted~~ answer further comprises instructions to:

predict the confidence factor from previously completed seat availability queries in response to a request for a confidence factor, according to a model using historical booking data as a factor in the model.

70. (Previously Presented) The computer program product of claim 69 wherein instructions to predict produces a confidence factor according to a model using as a factor in the model a threshold time, which if lapsed, indicates that the retrieved answer is considered stale.

71. (Currently Amended) A computer system for providing seat availability information, the computer system comprising:

a processor; and

a computer readable medium storing a computer program product comprising instructions for causing the computer to:

provide a ~~predicted~~ answer in response to a received seat availability query by instructions to:

retrieve a stored query from a cache that stores seat availability queries and answers to seat availability queries stored from previously completed seat availability queries sent to revenue management systems;

determine whether at least some fields in the stored seat availability query ~~either match or~~ are substantially close in characteristics to corresponding fields in the ~~user's~~ received seat availability query, with instructions to determine including instructions to:

approximately match the query fields in the received availability query to at least some of the query fields of a query stored in the cache database;

retrieve from the cache an answer corresponding to the stored query that was substantially close in characteristics to the seat availability query ~~matching the seat availability query from the cache~~;

determine whether the retrieved answer is not stale; and, if the retrieved answer is not stale,

return the retrieved answer as the provided ~~predicted~~ answer to the received ~~user's~~ seat availability query.

72. (Currently Amended) The computer of claim 71 wherein the computer program product further comprises instructions to:

store queries and answers from previously completed seat availability queries in the cache with the queries including at least one query fields [[of]] for airline name, flight number, origination, destination, date of query, traveler nationality, point of purchase, frequent flyer status and seller data.

73. (Previously Presented) The computer of claim 71 wherein instructions to match in the computer program product further comprises instructions to:

exactly match the query fields in the availability query to the query fields of a query stored in the cache database.

74. (Currently Amended) The computer of claim 71 wherein instructions to determine whether at least some of the fields match in the computer program product further comprises instructions to ~~approximately match the query fields in the availability query to at least some of the query fields of a query stored in the cache database~~

approximately match query fields of the availability query to the query fields stored in the cache database, by determining that values in the query field of the stored query are within a predefined range for values in corresponding fields in the received seat availability query.

75. (Currently Amended) The computer of claim 71 wherein the computer program product further comprises instructions to:

send an actual availability query to an airline availability system that includes a revenue management ~~algorithm and inventory management~~ system if the retrieved answer is stale;

return the actual answer received from the airline availability system ~~to the user~~; and

store the actual answer and query in the cache database ~~of the availability predictor~~.

76. (Currently Amended) The computer of claim 71 wherein instructions to returning the retrieved answer as the provided ~~predicted~~ answer to the received ~~user's~~ seat availability query further comprises instructions to:

determine that the retrieved answer from the cache database is stale;

return the retrieved answer as the provided ~~predicted~~ answer where the provided ~~predicted~~ answer includes a confidence factor corresponding to the provided ~~predicted~~ answer; and

accept the provided ~~predicted~~ answer, or not, based on the confidence factor.

77. (Previously Presented) The computer of claim 76 wherein the confidence factor indicates the answer to the seat availability query is based on an actual answer received in response to an actual availability query.

78. (Currently Amended) The computer of claim 76 wherein the confidence factor indicates the answer to the seat availability query is true or false to indicate availability, or not, of a provided ~~predicted~~ answer in the cache database.

79. (Previously Presented) The computer of claim 76 wherein the confidence factor indicates the answer to the seat availability query is within a certain estimated probability.

80. (Previously Presented) The computer of claim 76 wherein the confidence factor indicates a qualitative measure of seat availability.

81. (Previously Presented) The computer of claim 76 wherein instructions to return the retrieved answer as the predicted answer including a confidence factor corresponding to the predicted answer further comprises instructions to:

predict the confidence factor from previously completed seat availability queries in response to a request for a confidence factor, according to a model using historical booking data as a factor in the model.

82. (Previously Presented) The computer of claim 81, wherein the instructions to predict, produces a confidence factor according to a model using as a factor in the model a threshold time, which if lapsed, indicates that the retrieved answer is considered stale.